

Water-use bill rooted in science

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If it's credibility The Plain Dealer Editorial Board is after, then it could have done better than its March 18 editorial about my recent Lake Erie water-use legislation.

The editorial incorrectly mentioned that House Bill 473 "repeals current state law that protects both Lake Erie and its tributaries from large water withdrawals." This is not true. Instead, it creates a permitting process that guards against harmful withdrawals and brings Ohio into compliance with the 2008 Great Lakes Compact.

It also implied the bill violates this compact. In actuality, the bill exceeds the compact's requirements, protecting the lake over time. Without a timely regulatory program, default withdrawal thresholds will be applied.

A recent Columbus Dispatch article featured Kristy Meyer of the Ohio Environmental Council expressing support for the bill. "It's grounded in science," she said. "That's fantastic." In fairness, Meyer also expressed some concern about the legislation, and I will work toward a suitable outcome.

Finally, long before introducing HB 473, I sought counsel from the nonpartisan Office of the Legislative Inspector General, which found no conflict of interest between my sponsorship of this bill and my private business.

A serious debate about this issue cannot occur unless people — including newspaper editorial boards — are properly equipped with all the facts.

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